

Appropriations Sub-Committee Public Hearing February 22, 2013

**PLEASE Restore Funding to CT's Independent Living Centers**

My name is Mary Ann Cortina; and I have worked at Independence Northwest, a Center for Independent Living located in Naugatuck, CT for the past ten years. I have first-hand knowledge of the services that the five Centers for Independent Living provide to people with disabilities.

Independent Living Centers provide four core services to anyone with a disability. These services include: Advocacy, Peer Mentoring, Independent Living Skills Training and Information and Referral. Because of these services, many consumers are able to go back to school, obtain employment, secure affordable housing and learn the skills that are necessary to lead independent lives in their communities. This definitely results in state savings, because it reduces the reliance of these individuals on state and federal entitlement programs.

I would also like to mention that the Centers are a key component of Money Follows the Person (MFP). People with disabilities are transitioned from nursing homes to live in the community. Last year, Centers transitioned 164 people, and this saved the state approximately \$4.4M.

I believe the result of eliminating state funding to Independent Living Centers will definitely increase state expenses far beyond the cost savings, and ultimately will hurt Connecticut's children, adults and the elderly with disabilities.

Therefore, I urge you to reconsider restoring the funding to all Independent Living Centers in Connecticut.

Thank you for your time.

Mary Ann Cortina  
Terryville, CT  
Secretary